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ANNEXATION OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.

SPEECH

OF

HON. GALUSHA A. GROW,
OF PENNSYLVANIA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 1898.

WASHINGTON.
1898.

Mr. W. A. SMITH

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SPEECH
OF
HON. GALUSHA A. GROW.

The House having under consideration the joint resolution (H. Re. 250) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States.

Mr. GROW said:

Mr. SPEAKER: This nation needs the Hawaiian Islands for the benefit of its commerce in peace and its protection in war. It is a fact conceded by everybody that for commerce between the western shores of this continent and Asia there must be some intermediate land for a coaling station for ships engaged in commerce. The Hawaiian Islands hold such a position, being for all practical purposes about midway between the two continents, with a land-locked harbor unsurpassed in size and safety. To secure the possession of this harbor for the future against all contingencies the sovereignty of the islands is necessary, for whoever owns the islands owns the harbor. All treaties whatsoever would fall with a change of ownership.

It is claimed by the opponents of annexation that there is another route of equal commercial advantage and less in distance from continent to continent by the way of Unalaska. It is a route discovered in the argument of this question and not heretofore discovered by commerce. I venture the assertion that few, if any, vessels in trade between the American and Asiatic continents ever yet sailed on this route from San Francisco to any port in Asia, unless it was one in the Arctic seas.

When presented in this debate, it reminded me of the chap in New York who surprised the stockbrokers for a short time with a declaration that he had found a railroad route between New York and Chicago 250 miles shorter than any existing one, or any other that could be constructed, and he could prove it by his map. When the map was produced, there was a heavy red straight line drawn from New York to Chicago, which crossed the Alleghany Mountains at the highest summit in the range. And this was his shortest route. The map was correct, but the capital to build the railroad was not in sight.

Lines drawn on the map of a wide ocean representing the channels of commerce are very well if commerce follows such lines. But if it does not, reasons why it might do so are of little consequence. If the reasons urged against annexation now had prevailed while the purchase of Alaska was pending, we should not have this new logical route at all, for Alaska itself would still be Russian territory. There never has been any acquisition of territory without more or less opposition at the time of the acquisition, and the reasons were very much the same as those now offered—unconstitutional and dangerous to the liberties of the country.

I will not take the time of the House in discussing any constitutional question relative to the acquisition of territory by this

Government. Mr. Jefferson said in 1803 that there was no grant of power in the Constitution for such acquisition; yet, beginning with his Administration, we have acquired foreign territory in area more than three times as great as that claimed by the original thirteen colonies or which the Government owned at the time of the adoption of our present Constitution.

For almost a century, beginning with Jefferson, the nation has been acquiring territory by treaty and by joint resolution and under Administrations of different political parties. If anything can be settled by the uniform practice of the Government, the power to acquire territory ought to be settled by this uniform, unbroken practice for almost a century, sustained by every branch of the Government and ratified universally by the people.

I am content to follow this uniform, unbroken practice in the exercise of a power that must certainly rest somewhere in the Government, or it could not have been thus sustained by all departments of the Government for this long period.

This question is not a law to be construed; it is a power of government to be exercised. And by that exercise in the past and by that alone the nation has in this first hundred years of its existence been enabled to expand from thirteen feeble colonies, hemmed in by the Atlantic Ocean in front, the Mississippi River in the rear, and Spanish and French dominion on the south, to forty-five independent Commonwealths, spanning a whole continent from ocean to ocean and extending through almost every zone.

For the exercise of this power to acquire territory it only needs a clear, unequivocal commercial necessity for the American people and a willing consent of the people occupying the territory to be acquired. In such case, while there could be no question as to constitutional power, the circumstances existing at the time would determine as to the wisdom of its exercise.

The great reason for the exercise of this power now by the Congress of the United States applies to Hawaii and not to any other portion of the earth. It does not apply to Mexico, Canada, Cuba, or any other territory on the American continent. For the reason that after Cuba shall have established a republic, the institutions of all these countries being substantially republican can not be a menace in any way to our liberties, and there are no great commercial necessities, nor can there be any, requiring any government changes in our territorial relations with either of these nations. Hence in our commercial necessities Hawaii stands alone, separate and distinct from any other portion of the earth's surface, and in no way connected with any question that may hereafter arise as to other nations.

The ultimate annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the United States is not a new question. Every President except one for half a century has notified the nations of the earth that the people of these islands could never unite their destinies with any nation except our own. When England, in 1843, took possession of these islands, Mr. Legare, then Secretary of State, notified the Government of Great Britain of our position, and she withdrew. Later, when France attempted to take possession, Mr. Webster, then Secretary of State, repeated to France in substance Mr. Legare's dispatch to England, and France withdrew.

For fifty years every President except Cleveland has notified the world that no other nation would be permitted to establish their sovereignty over these islands, and that the people thereon must be allowed to control their own destiny. Grover Cleveland

was the first official in the administration of this Government to attempt a reversal of its historical policy relative to Hawaii.

He undertook to restore over that people a monarchy overthrown by its liberty-loving subjects and, using the revenue cutters and war ships of the nation with shotted guns as a menace in the harbor of Hawaii, he directed his accredited agent to the new Republic to demand, in the name of the United States, that its chosen officials should abdicate their powers, and, kneeling in abject submission at the foot of the restored throne, kiss the extended hand of its dusky Queen. This attempt by the President of the United States to restore a defunct monarchy will brand Grover Cleveland through all time in the annals of impartial history as recreant to liberty and false to the spirit and genius of free institutions.

If I had any doubt as to the vital importance of these islands to the future commercial well-being of the United States, I should hesitate long before setting up my own judgment against the united opinions of the long line of eminent statesmen who have been intrusted with the administration of public affairs, and who are held in so high estimation for political wisdom by their countrymen of all political parties. The gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. DISSMORE] quoted a general opinion by Mr. Sherman against the acquisition of foreign territory, and then attempted to impeach his own witness, who, as Secretary of State, signed the treaty for the acquisition of these very islands included in the resolutions before us.

He could have quoted with equal force from Mr. Legaré and Mr. Webster in their correspondence with England and France, in which they declared that it was not the policy of this Government to acquire colonial possession, and yet they both insisted that these islands, by the consent of their people, must some day become a part of American territory, or at least that they never could by our consent become a part of any other. And now when their people desire to cast their political fortunes with ours and we refuse, will it be claimed by anybody that henceforth we can rightfully prevent them from casting their lot with any other nation? Such a refusal would be an attempt on our part to impose upon them a despotic control more odious than was that of Cleveland.

The gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. DISSMORE] said that the time might come when it would be, perhaps, advisable to annex these islands, but not now. Now is the only time that the United States can rightfully dispose of that question. After our rejection the destiny of these islands is in the keeping of their people, and to be determined by them alone. Whether their fortunes shall then be cast with England, France, Japan, or any other nation will be for them to determine.

All questions arising out of the existing war with Spain properly belong by themselves and are to be settled in view of the circumstances and conditions existing at the time of their settlement.

In the discussion on the question before us we have heard much about wars and their dangers to liberty. War prosecuted for selfish ends in upholding despotic dynasties or for the mere extension of territorial dominion is an unmitigated, excusable barbarism.

But wars, with all their miseries and woes, in the interest of humanity, in behalf of struggling races or nationalities, to secure or regain their inalienable rights, have been of great benefit to

mankind. In the world's decisive battles from Marathon to Gettysburg, such battles as have changed for all time the current of human events and the destiny of empires, great battalions have always marched in the rear of great ideas.

The generation of the American people now fast passing away have had not a little home experience in the horrors of war. They have seen their country shrouded in the sable habiliments of mourning and woe and flooded with widows' and orphans' tears. And to the end of this generation an occasional tear for the unreturning brave will glisten in the eye of bereavement around disconsolate firesides. But the new Republic is worth over the old the priceless sacrifice of blood and sorrow which it cost. While "peace has its victories no less renowned than war," yet most of the mighty achievements in the onward progress of the race to a better civilization have been wrought by the sword.

It seems to be a part of the plans of Divine Providence that every marked advance in civilization must begin in mighty convulsions. The moral law was first proclaimed in the thunders of Sinai, and the earthly mission of the Saviour of mankind closed with the rending of mountains and the throes of the earthquake. The Goddess of Liberty herself was born in the shock of battle, and amid its carnage has carved out some of our grandest victories, while o'er its crimson fields the race has marched on to higher and nobler destinies. As the lightnings of heaven rend and destroy only to purify and reinvigorate, so freedom's cannon furrows the fields of decaying empires and seeds them anew with human gore, from which springs a more vigorous race to cherish the hopes and guard the rights of mankind.

The millennium, long promised, when the lion and the lamb will lie down together and a little child shall lead them, will some time come. But not till all governments are based on the consent of the governed and every human being is in the enjoyment of liberty protected by law. Then, and not till then, can the sword be beat into plowshares and the spear into pruning hooks. Until that time the ear of humanity will be pained with the roar of hostile cannon and the angels must weep over the martyred brave.

When the smoke vanished from the last battlefield of the American civil war and its armed hosts returned to their homes, laying aside their armor for the implements of the various avocations of peace, there was a universal belief that the Republic had seen its last war. It was not thought then that any circumstances could possibly ever arise for the Government to call its citizens again from their peaceful pursuits to the tented field. But such a summons has gone forth, and the drumbeat and tramp of marching armies are again heard, and the thrilling reports of unprecedented naval victories come floating over the seas.

This nation is at war with Spain to end her brutal warfare upon women and children and to put a stop to the infliction of her cruel atrocities upon a neighboring people, and because she failed to maintain in the Island of Cuba a government able and willing to protect the lives of American seamen under the flag of their country on a mission of peace to her ports.

In justice to the memory of the hero martyrs who died under the flag of their country by Spanish treachery, and in behalf of the claims of a common humanity, of a people doomed to extermination by starvation and the sword, this nation demanded that Spain

should withdraw her flag and forever abandon her sovereignty over the Island of Cuba.

For this purpose the President was authorized to intervene with the Army and the Navy of the United States and stop this doubly cruel and barbarous warfare. When that shall have been done the people of Cuba can then establish for themselves a free and independent government to be recognized by the United States of America as a sister republic.

In the discharge of this national obligation to humanity and to liberty, as well as the higher obligation and duty of protecting the lives of American seamen, under the flag of their country wherever it floats, this nation has intervened with its great power for the accomplishment of such a purpose. And when it shall have been accomplished, the vindication of the patriot heroes who found a watery grave in the harbor of Havana will be the expulsion forever of Spanish sovereignty from the American Continent. And these heroes will not then have died in vain. The tablet that will bear their memory through all time can then be inscribed:

Whether on the scaffold high
Or in the battle's van,
The fittest place where man can die
Is where he dies for man!

The objects to be obtained, and the only ones expected when Congress passed the declaration of war against Spain, were confined to the Island of Cuba. And the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. BLAND] and the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. RICHARDSON] quoted the declared purpose in that declaration of war to sustain their positions against any acquisition of territory as a result of the war.

I agree with them that when that declaration of war passed there was no purpose or thought by anybody of acquiring additional territory as a result of this war. Humanity alone controlled in the passage of this declaration. But a nation which appeals to battle for the settlement of any question must be ready to meet any and all responsibilities resulting therefrom, whether foreseen or not.

The same Congress of the United States which authorized the equipment of 500,000 men to preserve this Union declared by resolution that the war was not to be prosecuted for the emancipation of slavery. Yet the first gun fired in that conflict was the death knell of human bondage, and the sun in his course across the continent from ocean to ocean no longer rises on a master or sets on a slave.

In our national destiny what new pathways may be blazed out by American cannon on land and battle ships on the seas no prophetic ken can now foresee. And how and in what way the American people ought to discharge the new, unforeseen, unexpected responsibilities cast upon them in far off Asia no human sagacity can now foretell.

If the intervention of this nation in the affairs of Spain in behalf of humanity and liberty in Cuba shall result, in the providences of God, in the emancipation of ten millions of people in her colonies from her despotic rule, shall the American people shrink from these new responsibilities in behalf of liberty and humanity? Has the rule of Spain in the Philippines been any more humane than in Cuba? Through a long history her cruelty in peace and brutality in war have produced at intervals long or



short the Alvas and the Weylers, counterparts of the Neros and Caligulas of pagan Rome in the zenith of her brutal shows of dying gladiators and women and children torn to pieces by wild beasts in the arena of her Coliseum, a gala-day spectacle for Roman holidays.

Within a week after the declaration of war against Spain by the Congress of the United States 8,000,000 of people in the Philippines that had been subjected for four hundred years to the despotic, cruel rule of Spain, such as she had exercised over the Island of Cuba, were liberated from their thralldom by a naval victory in battle unparalleled in the world's history, unexpected and unthought of when the declaration of war against Spain passed.

Commodore Dewey, with a squadron of the American Navy, cruising in Asiatic waters on the customary mission of his Government to friendly nations, suddenly finds himself shut out of the ports and harbors of every nation by the enforcement of the international law of strict neutrality between belligerents. With the Stars and Stripes flying at the masthead of his squadron he enters a harbor of Spain, destroying its land fortifications and sinking a formidable navy moored there for their defense, without the loss of a man or a ship, and with slight injury to either.

Does anyone who believes in the control of an overruling Providence in the affairs of men believe that such a victory was a mere accident? There is a divinity in the destiny of nations as well as in the lives of individuals—

That shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.

In the retributions for organized national wrongs it is fixed in the immutable decrees of that overruling Providence that nations which incorporate into their institutions, their customs, or their laws a barbarism that blunts the sense of justice and chills the humanity of their people will soon or late surely die. It is the great fact stamped on all the crumbling ruins that strew the pathway of empires.

If we divest ourselves of the egotistical belief so congenial to human nature that the generation of the present is wiser than any that will succeed it, we can then safely intrust the settlement of all public questions to the considerate judgment of the generation that may be called upon to settle them, in full confidence that it will be done quite as wisely and as well as it would be if done by ourselves. Let the present generation with bold and manly hearts meet its own responsibilities to liberty and humanity, and settle them in its own best judgment in view of surrounding circumstances, without reference to supposed conjectural conditions in the future.

Trust no future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead past bury its dead!
Act, act in the living present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

The starry banner of our fathers, baptized in patriot blood in the first and second war of American independence, and rechristened in the mighty conflict of arms in the history of the race, will henceforth, over whatever portion of the earth's surface it may float, be the emblem of liberty, justice, and the inalienable rights of mankind.